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Tiros I May Prove Unintentional Spy

By JOHN W. FINNEY
Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, April 5—The Tiros I satellite is working so well that the space agency is worried that it may unintentionally have placed a blurry-eyed spy in the sky.

Officials of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, after repeated earlier denials, conceded today that there was a possibility that Tiros I, aside from taking pictures of the earth's cloud cover, might also be obtaining rudimentary photographs of objects on the earth's surface.

It still has not been established that Tiros I is taking detailed pictures of the earth's surface, and some prominent space agency scientists feel that it has no such photographic capability. For the moment, however, the possibility is not being dismissed that the satellite may be able to make a large-scale survey of much of the earth's surface, including southern Russia and Red China.

Officials Perturbed

This possibility is causing considerable anxiety in the space agency, the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency. It would mean that the United States, with what was supposed to be strictly a scientific satellite, had ushered in the day, with all its difficult and unsettled legal and diplomatic problems, when space satellites were used to spy on the territory of a potential enemy.

The space agency's sensitivity over the possible reconnaissance capability of its satellites was indicated in a special statement issued tonight trying to minimize the idea that Tiros might be a spy-in-the-sky.

The statement said that the satellite's cameras would be able to detect "little or no detail of large objects on the ground other than recognizable large land features."

The statement was issued before the space agency had had a chance to study and analyze any large number of the Tiros' pictures to see what detail they contained. Thus far only a few of the Tiros' pictures have been received here by the space agency.

Tiros I, in an orbit that carries it over southern Russia and Communist China, was never intended or designed to take pictures of the earth's surface in any detail. In fact, before the launching last Friday morning, the satellite's two television cameras were put through elaborate tests just to be certain they were not capable of ground reconnaissance.

Pictures of the earth were taken with the cameras from high-flying airplanes, and from these results the space agency attempted to extrapolate whether the cameras would detect features on earth from an orbital altitude of 400 miles.

It was on the basis of these tests that the space agency asserted repeatedly after the launching that the satellite would have no reconnaissance capability.

The space agency, however, has been pleasantly surprised by the unexpectedly good quality of pictures sent back by Tiros I, and now is no longer so certain that some useful pictures of the earth will not be taken by the satellite.

As a result, the space agency, on urgings from the State Department and intelligence agencies, is becoming extremely cautious and somewhat secretive about the pictures being taken by the satellite.

Carries Two Cameras

Tiros I carries two television cameras; one a wide-angle camera taking pictures over a 640,000 square mile area, the other a narrow-angle camera taking pictures covering 10,000 square miles, an area about the size of Maryland. It is the latter camera that may be able to detect features on earth.

The space agency has been reluctant to discuss the capabilities of the narrow-angle camera or the pictures it is taking.

For example, it had declined to make public the ground resolution power of the camera. Space agency officials finally disclosed today that its ground resolution was one-fifth of a mile. In other words, the camera, at least in theory, should be able to detect objects 1,000 feet square or bigger. This resolution would obviously be sufficient to pick out such military installations as airfields and missile bases.

The space agency has now classified pictures taken by the narrow-angle camera.

It is reported that no pictures will be released until they have been analyzed by intelligence experts.

The statement issued tonight by the space agency also pointed out that an object a fifth of a mile long would only appear as a "blip" on one line of the television pictures. Each of the pictures, covering a 10,000-square-mile area, is made up of 500 lines.

"An object this size," the statement said, therefore, "would be completely indistinguishable as to its identity." The statement added that "many extraneous blips" of this size have been appearing in the pictures received thus far. The "blips" presumably were caused by interference or static in the radio transmissions of the pictures.

Pioneer at 3,400,000 Miles

WASHINGTON, April 6 (UPI)—Pioneer V, the artificial planetoid launched March 11, was 3,427,794 miles from the earth at noon today.

Its speed relative to the earth will be 5,363 miles an hour at noon tomorrow.

Pioneer's five-watt transmitter is still making regular reports to tracking stations.

The satellite's 150-watt transmitter, expected to maintain communications over 50,000,000 miles or more, will be turned on by radio command only when the smaller transmitter can no longer do the job, probably by May 15.

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